

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 651 without my signature.

While I greatly applaud the author's general intent to lower the number of special education referrals for students who have not learned how to read and to provide assistance to these students, this bill creates a program that is essentially duplicative of efforts addressed through the 2004-05 Budget Act. The budget included a \$29.6 million appropriation for purposes of the Reading First program. As a condition of receiving these grant funds, grantees are required to provide a plan to lower the number of special education referrals based upon reading below grade-level and to provide alternative assistance to these pupils.

These plans would consist of, but not be limited to, providing diagnostic reading assessments, teacher release time to review assessment information and conduct reading intervention planning sessions, providing instruction to pupils identified as having reading difficulties, and teacher participation in the professional development activities focused on assisting students with reading difficulties. Because these funds and efforts are now in place since the signing of the budget, this bill is not necessary.

For these reasons I am unable to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger